

PROCEEDINGS AND SPEECHES

ON THE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DEATH

OF

HON. R. L. Y. PEYTON,

OF MISSOURI,

In the House of Representatives of the Confederate States,
December 19th, 1863.

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EULOGIES.

ON THE

DEATH OF HON. ROBERT L. Y. PEYTON,

OF MISSOURI.

ADDRESS OF HON. CASPAR W. BELL,

OF MISSOURI.

The message from the Senate, announcing the death of the Hon. R. L. Y. PEYTON, a Senator from the State of Missouri, having been read to the House—

Mr. BELL arose and said:

Mr. Speaker—I rise to the performance of a mournful duty. My colleagues have assigned to me the office of proposing resolutions responsive to the message just read from the Senate, announcing to the House the death of one of the Senators from the State of Missouri.

The Hon. ROBT L. Y. PEYTON, while attempting to make his way to a portion of his constituents, on the 3d of September last, at Bladen Springs, in the State of Alabama was arrested by the hand of the great destroyer of human existence. Up to a few days of his decease, he retained, unimpaired, his mental faculties, and was entirely conscious of his approaching dissolution. And though far removed from his home, deprived of the soothing endearments of kindred affection and the sacred ministrations of a devoted and pious mother, he yet approached that ordeal—the severest that can test or terrify the human sensibilities—with calmness and resignation, breathing his last prayer for the success of our cause, and for the redemption of that people he so faithfully represented.

The deceased was born in Loudoun county, in the State of Virginia, in the month of December, in the year 1824, and was, consequently, in his thirty-ninth year when he died. When thirteen years old, he removed, with his father, to the State of Ohio, and in his sixteenth year became a student of the Miami University, where he was graduated in his twentieth year, receiving the highest honors, as a mark of his proficiency in the various branches of science taught in that institution. Upon the completion of his academic course, he became a student of law at the University of Virginia, and in one year was graduated on that ticket, with honorable distinction.

The quick and active intellect of the deceased, exhibited by so many distinguishing marks of brilliancy—his mind flashing its way into subjects with the rapidity of lightning—gave promise of a career of great usefulness and distinction. Had he been spared to the end even of his senatorial term, I have no doubt he would have fully redeemed the

promise of his youth. For his career, from the time of his entry upon the duties of manhood to his death, though marked with many adverse circumstances, so far from diminishing this hope, inspired it with renewed and increasing confidence. Young and inexperienced—just twenty-two years old—seventeen years ago, the deceased located himself in Harrisonville, Cass county, in the southwestern part of the State of Missouri, as a candidate for the practice of the law. An entire stranger in that community—without means, and with a widowed mother and two sisters depending upon him for their support—he commenced his professional career as a practising lawyer. And at a bar which will compare favorably with any in the West, by his brilliant declamatory powers, his argumentative skill and unremitting attention to business, soon placed himself at the head of his profession, and amassed a handsome fortune.

In the year 1858, such was the esteem and regard into which he had grown among the people where he lived that, contrary to his own wishes he was chosen a representative to the Senate of his State.

In this body, although an entirely new field to him, he very early acquired the character of an able and eloquent debater—an active and vigilant legislator; while his equanimity of temper, and his courteous demeanor, combined, with a just perception of all the concerns of life, drew around him the esteem and confidence of various members of every party; and before the close of his first session, was ranked as one of the leaders of the democratic party of the State—a party which could justly boast of a large number of gentlemen whose talents and attainments would grace any office of this Government.

In the last presidential election, which occurred under the old Union, the democratic party was divided in its support between the Breckinridge and Douglass tickets. Deeply indoctrinated with what was popularly denominated States rights doctrines, and earnestly impressed with the belief that these principles would be more sacredly guarded by the elevation of Mr. Breckinridge to the position of President, the deceased attached himself promptly to that party, and with a zeal and eloquence rarely, if ever, excelled canvassed the State in support of its principles. His efforts were not without results. For while he failed to place his party in ascendancy in the State, yet such was the bold and fearless manner in which he attacked and exposed the dangerous doctrines and heresies of the republican party, and the eloquent appeals he made in behalf of the rights of the South, and the duty it owed to itself in defending these rights, that he awakened the minds of that people to a true sense of their danger, and contributed much toward preparing their minds for that noble stand of resistance which they have ever since maintained with a devotion which no disregard of their rights has abated, and no persecution of their enemies can or will destroy.

Upon the threatening of hostilities to the State at the head of a large and gallant regiment, equipped to some extent from his private means, the deceased marched to the seat of war, and in an arduous and severe campaign, approved himself a gallant and efficient officer. He participated in every battle that was fought by that heroic band—the Missouri State Guard—and received on each occasion the commendations of his commanding officer for his heroism and skill.

Near the close of this campaign, he was elected a member of the Provisional Congress, and by the Legislature of his State chosen one of her Senators in the Congress of the Confederate States. He did not take his seat in the Provisional Congress until near the close of that body's labors, and, consequently, took no public part in its proceedings. As a Senator—being its youngest member—he but seldom addressed that body; but his efforts there were characterized with great ability, assigning him, by common consent, to a high rank as a speaker, while his unremitting attendance on the sessions of the Senate, his deep interest manifested on all

questions, and particularly such as affected more immediately his own constituency, made him a valuable and useful legislator.

Such, Mr. Speaker, is a brief sketch of him whose death we are now called to mourn. He needs no greater eulogium than the simple story of his being, to mark his name upon the page of his country's history, as a man of lofty genius, a true patriot, a brave warrior, and a most worthy and estimable gentleman. His death will be mourned by all who knew him, and by none with a deeper anguish than his immediate constituency.

He has been summoned away from us at a moment of deep and intense interest to the country—a moment when the fate of millions is suspended in the balance, and when our country is reeling and staggering under the weight of the severest afflictions—a moment when our peaceful vales are resounding with the clash of arms and the hoarse clamor of war—when war, red and wrathful war, is scattering far and wide its interminable evils, and leaving to us scarce an after-piece of hope, to mitigate the pangs of its wide-spread desolation.

Had he been spared to us longer, I feel warranted in saying no one would have brought to the relief of our country, in this her time of great need, a deeper, a holier, or a more unselfish patriotism than the deceased. But, Mr. Speaker, his labors have now ended—his record has been made up—his course has been run, and to the repose of the grave we would leave him to rest. I now beg leave, Mr. Speaker, to offer the following resolutions as a mark of respect for the memory of the deceased:

Resolved, That this House has heard, with deep sensibility, the announcement of the death of Hon. ROBERT L. Y. PEYTON, lately a Confederate Senator from the State of Missouri.

Resolved, That as a further token of our respect for the deceased, the House do now adjourn.

ADDRESS OF HON. THOS. W. FREEMAN.

OF MISSOURI.

Mr. Speaker—You have heard from my colleague, the announcement of the death of Hon. R. L. Y. PEYTON, one of the Senators from the State of Missouri. It was my fortune to have known him intimately for ten years before his death. Soon after I settled in southwest Missouri, in the year 1853, I became acquainted with him, then located at Harrisonville, Cass county, Missouri, he was then quite a young man, but by his sterling worth, together with his genius and ability, soon ranked as one of the best lawyers and advocates in western Missouri. It required no ordinary mind to take such position with such men as Russell Hicks, Sam Woodson, D. C. Balloo and Waldo P. Johnson, some of whom had already obtained a national reputation in the government to which we lately belonged. He participated in the Kansas difficulties, together with many other distinguished men of that day, among whom was the honorable member from the third congressional district in South Carolina, that I now see before me. Had the South been filled with such men as the deceased, Kansas would to-day have formed a part of this Confederacy. In 1858, he was elected from the senatorial district in Missouri, composed of the counties of Bates, Cass and Jackson, by almost a unanimous vote. He took his seat in the winter of 1858-9 and although the youngest member of the Senate, soon won the reputation of one of the most talented and eloquent members of that body. Just before the meet-

ing of the Legislature, as before stated, a band of thieves and murderers from Kansas Territory, invaded the State of Missouri and murdered a worthy and quiet citizen. Immediately after the assembling of that body, the deceased introduced resolutions making inquiry of the Executive of the State, in relation to the subject, and calling upon the Governor to place a regiment of men on the border of Missouri to protect the citizens from further outrage. Upon the passage of the resolutions, the Senator from Cass spoke, and several of the leading journals in the State, in speaking of his effort, said such a speech had not been heard at the capitol since the days of "David Barten."

The Legislature met again in the winter of 1860-1, at which session, a Senator to the United States Congress was to be elected. While the two bodies were in joint session, for that purpose, and after a violent speech had been made by one of the Senators, denouncing those States which had already seceded, the deceased, at the solicitation of friends, consented to reply, and reply he did, in one of the most masterly defenses of the South and her action, that it has ever been my fortune to listen to, for massive energy of thought, aptness of illustration, and strength of pathos, has but few equals and no superiors.

The Legislature continued in session until the capture of the State troops by the Federals at camp Jackson, and the massacre of women and children on the same day, in the streets of St. Louis. On the adjournment of the Legislature, Mr. Peyton returned home, and soon raised a regiment of men, and participated in the battles of Certhage, Springfield, Drywood and Lexington, where he displayed the most unfaltering courage and bravery. He continued to command his regiment until the Legislature elected him one of the delegates to the provisional Congress, and also one of the Senators from the State of Missouri, to the permanent Congress. He made but few speeches in either body, yet the few he made were characterized by ability.

When Congress adjourned, in May last, few men of his age in this government, had a more brilliant prospect before them; but death's "wintry whirlwind soon swept the prised vapor into nothing." By his death Virginia (the State of his nativity) has lost another of her most gifted and talented children; Missouri (the State of his adoption) has lost one of her most pure and patriotic statesmen, and the Confederacy one of her most devoted and able advocates. As a citizen, he was just; as a companion, he was genial; as a friend, he was true, and as a soldier he was brave. Thus lived and thus died Robert L. Y. PEXTON.

He lived but long enough, Mr. Speaker, to see the people of his own loved State, downtrodden and oppressed, their homes desolated, their property destroyed and many of them scattered like sheep without a shepherd; yet no doubt he was consoled in his last hours, with the reflection that he, together with the noble spirits of his State, had gallantly defended the liberties of the South, and doubtless died entrusting his people to the guidance and protection of the Confederacy, the government of their choice. In our last interview, he spoke of the "loved ones at home," and expressed a desire to see them; but his voice will never more make these friends glad, nor will their hearts throb again with pleasure at the sound of his footfall around the door sills. The sun will continue to beam as brightly as before, but his rays will not reach his narrow home. The rainbow will again display its beautiful colors, but it will not be his eye that shall be turned to gaze upon its ephemeral beauty. The birds will sing as sweetly as before, but their notes will not fall upon the ear of the departed patriot. When spring time comes, the flowers will again bloom as freshly, but it will not be around his footsteps. The beautiful "Marie du Cygne," upon whose margin he has so often lingered will still rush between its green banks, but it will not be beneath the vision of his eye. The stirred forrest, where he has so often wandered in

manhood's happy hour, will still breath its notes of music; but it will not be his ear that shall be turned to its mystical hymn; but there is a spirit-land of which these relinquished beauties are only a faint type; there the flowers never fade, and not a withered leaf mars the eternal beauties of the spring. In that bright land, I hope my lamented friend has met those lion-hearted associates, Waitman, Brown, Rives, Erwin, Slack and Green, and that they may there welcome him to their blessed and happy home.

ADDRESS OF HON. LEWIS M. AYER,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Mr. Speaker—I should be untrue to the dictates of my heart, were I to allow this melancholy occasion to pass, without attempting to give some voice to my feelings. My acquaintance with Senator PEYTON began only with the first session of Congress, but I very soon learned to esteem him highly for his many amiable and admirable qualities.

In the year 1856, it was my good fortune to visit and spend several months in the great—the magnificent State of Missouri. A lively and grateful recollection of the warm-hearted, generous hospitality which I had enjoyed at the hands of the people of that State, together with the fact that I met here, in the person of one of her worthy representatives, (Mr. BELL,) an intimate college friend, had the effect of soon bringing about an acquaintance and placing me on very friendly terms with every member of that delegation.

Last spring, while I was myself prostrated at home by sickness, this House had to mourn the untimely death of one of its members from Missouri. The youthful, but talented, modest, generous and accomplished Judge Wm. M. Cooke then passed from this scene of his earthly labors to his eternal rest. His seat on this floor is empty, but he will ever occupy a place in our affections.

And now, sir, we are again called to mourn the death of another noble Missourian. Alas, sir! heavy and bitter have been the misfortunes of that great State. She has, indeed, been deluged with blood and tears. Her true men have been banished from her borders. The red hand of war has felled many of them on the battle-field, while the inscrutable decrees of Providence have removed two of them forever from the councils of the Confederacy. *Sed vixit post se era virtus.*

Mr. PEYTON was eminently social in his disposition, conscientious in all his dealings, firm in the maintenance of his own opinions, but conceded the same right of free and independent thought and action to others which he claimed and exercised for himself. If the whole character of a gentleman may be summed up and expressed in the single word CONSIDERATION, which I am disposed to regard a just definition, Mr. PEYTON was a perfect gentleman, for he ever manifested a thoughtful and kind consideration for the feelings of others. If we had not been expressly told of his devotion to his mother and sister, we should still have felt assured, from our knowledge of him, that he was a man of just the feelings and disposition that would be sensitively alive to the unspeakable spell which attaches itself to the hallowed name of MOTHER. Such a man is never without friends.

Relying on the justice of our cause and the patriotism and courage of the southern people, Mr. PEYTON never entertained doubt or despondency in regard to the complete triumph of the South and the ultimate

redemption of his beloved State from the cruel hand of the oppressor. He has not been spared to enjoy, in peace and prosperity, the fruits of his labors and sacrifices in the cause of his country, but while we pause, now, to drop a tear on his new-made grave, let us resolve to emulate his patriotic example, and, with manly heart and hope, press forward in the performance of the noble and glorious work set before us—the salvation of our country.

ADDRESS OF HON. T. L. BURNETT,

OF KENTUCKY.

Mr. Speaker—It is right that the voice of Kentucky should unite with that of Missouri in commemorating the name and virtues of her deceased son, ROBERT L. Y. PEYTON. In the beginning of this great struggle for independence, he planted himself firmly upon the constitutional rights of his State. In the last presidential contest he was an elector for the State at large, and by his energy and eloquence did much to awaken the people to a sense of the danger which then threatened them. Upon the invasion of his State, he was among the first to rush to her rescue. Between a despicable absolutism on the one hand, and free government on the other, he was not the man to hesitate, and although young, he was not unknown. Nature had blessed him with abilities of the first order, and both as a lawyer and orator, he held a high position. He raised a regiment, and with it fought on every battle field in the State of Missouri. He was elected a Senator in Congress when the people of his State needed the services of her best, her purest, her most gifted men. How he discharged the duties of legislation it is not for me to speak, as his name is honorably written upon the pages of his country's history; and his sound judgment illustrated in the records of this Congress. But, sir, he is gone: cut off in the morning of his usefulness. Not only the people of his own down-trodden State, but the whole Confederacy have cause to mourn his loss. And whilst the people of Missouri have rendered her name forever glorious—not only in contributing the indomitable Price and his band of immortal heroes, who, unaided and alone, maintained a single-handed contest with our most cruel and barbarous foe—but have sacrificed in their country's cause many noble, brave, and true men, she has yielded none more patriotic and praiseworthy than her deceased Senator. And whether he be remembered in the camp, in the Senate, or in social intercourse, all will bear evidence to his unsurpassed gallantry on the field, his ability as a legislator, his uniform modesty, and great worth as a true and valued friend. May we remember his virtues and emulate his example. Let us reflect upon the shortness of human life, and the vanity of all earthly aspirations.

"Like leaves on trees, the race of man is found,
Now green in youth—now withering on the ground,
The following spring another race supplies,
They fall successive and successive rise,
Thus, generations in their course decay,
So flourish these when those have passed away."

A great man has fallen; his fame is the nation's inheritance. Of such is the highest type of national character made up. They are the nation's jewels. May they be forever remembered, appreciated, revered.



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